

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 3-16. Please add new claims 17-34. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Currently amended claims are shown with additions underlined and deletions in ~~strike through text~~. No new matter is added by this amendment to the claims.

Claim 1 (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising: ~~for performing the remote, real-time identification of the contents of containers by means of multiple radio frequency identification systems comprising:~~

a container;

~~at least one~~ a passive radio frequency tag ~~that may be configured to be coupled~~ attached to an object ~~objects~~ within a the container;

~~at least one~~ a radio frequency identification interrogator ~~affixed~~ configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to ~~capable of addressing and acquiring~~ acquire an inventory-related information associated with the passive information from the radio frequency tags tag;

a data storage means; and

~~a means of stored electrical power;~~

an externally accessible ~~read/write~~ radio frequency tag coupled ~~affixed~~ to the an exterior portion of the container;

~~an external radio frequency identification interrogator or interrogators compatible with the externally accessible read/write radio frequency tag or tags; and~~

~~an interface between the container-affixed radio frequency identification interrogator or interrogators, the data storage means, and the externally accessible radio frequency tag or tags, so that the identities of the radio frequency tags within the container may be acquired by the container-affixed~~ interior radio frequency identification interrogator ~~or interrogators,~~ configured to transfer the inventory-related information stored within to the data storage means, ~~transferred the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-~~

related information to the externally accessible read/write radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when or tags and then retrieved by an interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator or interrogators.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the externally accessible radio frequency RF tag or tags are is at least one of an active tags tag or a semi-passive tag, the data storage means being included in the externally accessible radio frequency tag.

Claims 3-16 (Cancelled)

Claim 17 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the interior radio frequency identification interrogator is triggered to acquire the inventory-related information in response to the container being closed.

Claim 18 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the interior radio frequency identification interrogator is triggered to acquire the inventory-related information when the container is closed and in response to at least one of a signal from a motion sensor or a signal produced by a timer.

Claim 19 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the interior radio frequency identification interrogator is an interrogator antenna coupled to the externally accessible radio frequency tag.

Claim 20 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the externally accessible radio frequency tag is prevented from sending the indicator to the external radio frequency identification interrogator when the container is open.

Claim 21 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the externally accessible radio frequency tag is configured to change from a power-conserving mode to an inventory-acquiring mode when a switch that is configured to be attached to the container is toggled in response to the container being closed, the externally accessible radio frequency tag uses the interior radio frequency identification interrogator when in the inventory-acquiring mode to acquire the inventory-related information during an interrogation time period.

Claim 22 (New) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the inventory related information acquired from the passive radio frequency tag is translated by the externally accessible radio frequency tag from a signal that is incompatible with the external radio frequency identification interrogator into a signal that is compatible with the external radio frequency identification interrogator.

Claim 23 (New) A method, comprising:
 acquiring information associated with a radio frequency tag disposed within a container using an interior radio frequency interrogator disposed within the container, the acquiring being triggered when the container changes from being open to closed, the radio frequency tag coupled to an object disposed within the container; and
 transferring the information to an exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to the container, the exterior radio frequency tag configured to send an inventory indicator to an external interrogator, the inventory indicator being based on the information.

Claim 24 (New) The method of claim 23, further comprising:
 preventing the exterior radio frequency tag from sending the inventory indicator to the external interrogator when the container is open.

Claim 25 (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the interior radio frequency interrogator is an interior interrogator antenna used by the exterior radio frequency tag to acquire the information, the exterior radio frequency tag is coupled to the interior interrogator antenna.

Claim 26 (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the acquiring includes acquiring during an interrogation time period, a start of the interrogation time period is defined when the container changes from being open to closed.

Claim 27 (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the radio frequency tag is a passive radio frequency tag.

Claim 28 (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the container is a first container disposed inside of a second container, the interior radio frequency interrogator is a first interior radio frequency interrogator, the exterior radio frequency tag is a first exterior radio frequency tag disposed within the second container,

the method further comprising:

acquiring information associated with the first exterior radio frequency tag using a second interior radio frequency interrogator disposed within the second container and disposed exterior to the first container; and

transferring the information associated with the first exterior radio frequency tag to a second exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to the second container.

Claim 29 (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the acquiring includes acquiring at a first time,

the method, further comprising:

sending the information at a second time to the external interrogator as a beacon signal after a preset time interval has elapsed, the sending being prevented when the container is open, the second time being after the first time.

Claim 30 (New) The method of claim 23, further comprising:

receiving at the exterior radio frequency tag a polling signal from the external interrogator at a first time when the container is open, the polling signal being a request for the inventory information; and

sending the inventory information at a second time to the external interrogator when the container is closed, the second time being after the first time.

Claim 31 (New) An apparatus, comprising:

an exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to a container and configured to send an inventory indicator to an external interrogator, the inventory indicator indicating inventory information associated with a group of radio identification tags disposed within the container; and

an interior interrogator coupled to the exterior radio frequency tag and configured to be disposed within an interior portion of the container, the interior interrogator configured to poll during an interrogation time period each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags to acquire an identification of each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags, the inventory information being based on the identification of each radio identification tag.

Claim 32 (New) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein a start of the interrogation time period is defined by at least one of a toggling of a switch when the container is closed, a toggling of the switch when the container is opened, a signal from a motion sensor, or a signal from the external interrogator.

Claim 33 (New) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein a radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags is configured to be attached to an object, at least one of the object or the radio identification tag is oriented within the container to facilitate the acquiring by the interior interrogator.

Claim 34 (New) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the exterior radio frequency tag is prevented from sending the inventory indicator to the external interrogator when the container is open.